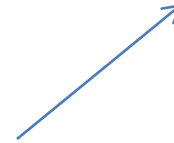


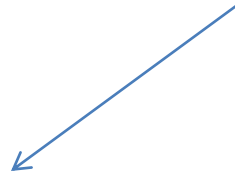
# What does the title mean?

Personal context explored  
Self-reflexive perhaps ? –  
exploring the constructs of his  
own personality?

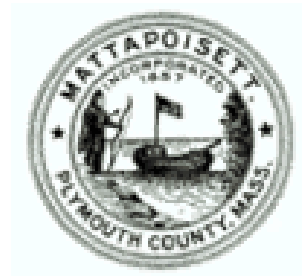


## COMMANDER LOWELL

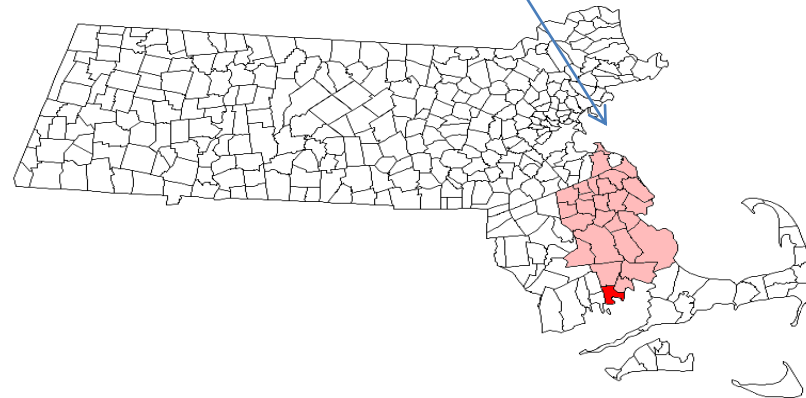
Status implied  
Authority figure  
Military – discipline  
Personality traits suggested:  
control, forceful



## Unflattering image of mother opens poem



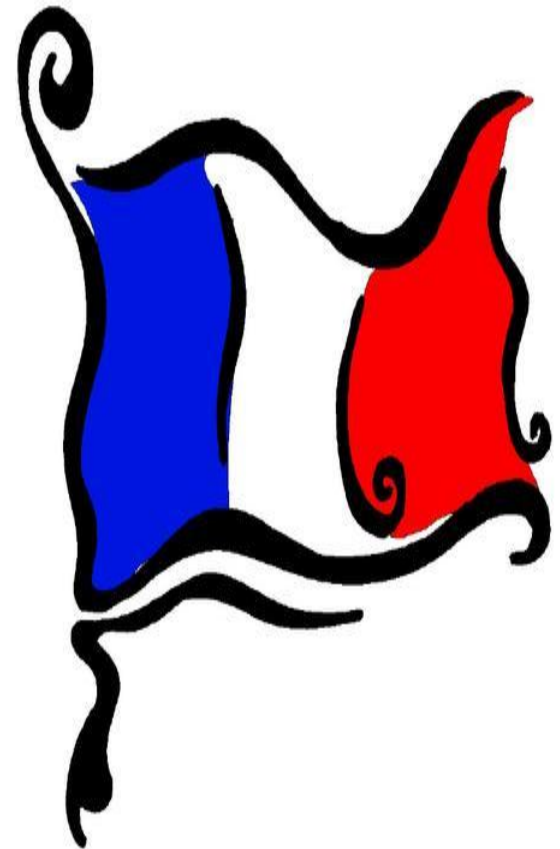
There were no **undesirables** or girls in my set,  
when I was a boy at Mattapoisett —  
Only **Mother**, still her Father's daughter.  
Her voice was still electric  
with a hysterical, unmarried panic,  
When she read to me from the Napoleon book.



Long-nosed Marie Louise  
Hapsburg in the frontispiece  
had a downright Boston bashfulness,  
where she grovelled to Bonaparte, who scratched his navel,  
and bolted his food – just my seven years tall!  
and I, bristling and manic,  
skulked in the attic,  
and got two hundred French generals by name,  
from A to V – from Augereau to Vandamme.  
I used to **dope** myself asleep,  
naming those unpronounceables like **sheep**.

Why the French  
reference?

What does this suggest  
about his character?



Having a naval **officer** —————>

Why do you think he does not state his rank even though the poem is titled “Commander”?

for my Father was nothing to shout about to the summer colony at “Matt”.

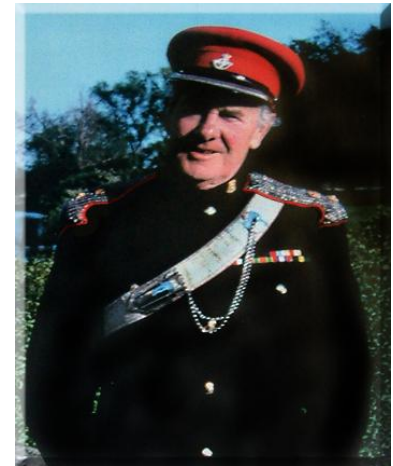
he wasn't at all **“serious,”** —————>

How is ‘serious’ used?

when he showed up on the golf course, wearing a blue **serge jacket** and numbly cut

**white duck** he'd bought at a Pearl Harbour commissariat...

What does this image tell you?



And took four shots with his putter to sink his putt.

“Bob”, they said, “golf’s a game you really ought to know how to play, if you play at all”.

They wrote him off as “naval,”

naturally supposed his sport was sailing.

Patronising tone

**Poor Father**, his training was engineering!

Cheerful and **cowed** —————> alliteration

among the **seadogs** at the Sunday yacht club,

he was never one of the crowd.

metaphor



# “Anchors aweigh,”

**Daddy** boomed in his bathtub,

term of endearment

“Anchors aweigh,”

when Lever Brothers offered to pay  
him double what the Navy paid.

I **nagged** for his dress sword with gold braid,

and **cringed** because Mother, new

Caps on all her teeth, was born anew

at forty. With seamanlike celerity,

Father left the Navy,

And deeded Mother his property.

What does this tell you about Lowell?

Why? What tension is set up?



He was soon fired. Year after year,  
he still hummed “Anchors aweigh” in the tub –  
whenever he left a job,  
he bought a smarter car.  
Father’s last employer  
was Scudder, Stevens and Clark, Investment Advisors,  
himself his only client. —————→ Ineffectual

While Mother dragged to bed alone,  
read Menninger, —————→ psychiatrist      tension between  
and grew more and more **suspicious**,      parents  
he grew **defiant**.



Loosely translated - has deserted the  
brightness of the lamp.

Night after night,  
à la clarté déserte de sa lampe,  
He slid his ivory Annapolis slide rule  
Across a pad of graphs –  
Piker speculations! In three years  
He squandered sixty thousand dollars.

sibilance





Smiling on all, —————> Popular

Father was once successful enough to be lost  
in the mob of ruling-class Bostonians.

As early as 1928, —————>

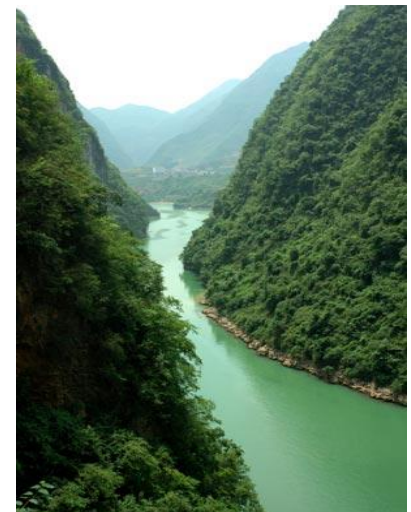
Interwar  
Period

he owned a house converted to oil,  
and redecorated by the architect  
of St. Mark's School...Its main effect  
was a drawing room, "longitudinal as Versailles",  
its ceiling, roughened with oatmeal, was blue as the sea.

And once  
nineteen, the **youngest ensign** in his class,  
he was "the old man" of a gunboat on the Yangtze.

heroism

Chinese River



# Forming an Overview

- Where is the satire?
- What does he criticise?
- Why the allusions to France?
- How would you describe Lowell's parent's marriage?
- Why do you think Lowell is ambivalent?
- What do you think the title means now?